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The Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

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(For Teachers of Four- and Five-Year-Olds)

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Table of Contents

Section	Page
To the Teacher	1
The Developmental Capabilities of the Young Child: What Happens to Four- and Five-Year-Olds in Traffic?	2
Common Preschool Pedestrian Accidents	3
Helping Children Use Their WITS: How the Program Works	5
A Note about the Lessons	6
Lesson 1: The Brothers	7
Lesson 2: The Six Steps	9
Lesson 3: Andrew and the Big Kids	11
Lesson 4: Sharon Goes to School	13
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 6	17
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 7	21
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 8	25
Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 9	29

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To the Teacher . . .

Welcome to the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This guidebook is designed for teachers of four- and five-year-olds. A companion guidebook is available for teachers of two- and three-year-olds.

Traffic safety is everyone's concern. As a caregiver, you know the dangers that await young children in traffic. But do you realize that motor vehicle-related accidents are the major cause of death to preschoolers? According to the National Safety Council, more than 11,000 children under the age of six are killed or injured in pedestrian accidents each year.

To address this problem the WITS Program was created. It was developed by child development specialists at Applied Management Sciences, Inc., under the sponsorship of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of the Department of Transportation (DOT). The WITS Program was designed to help reduce the chances of preschool children becoming involved in pedestrian traffic accidents. Because most preschool accidents occur in residential urban areas, the focus of the WITS Program is in urban areas. The advice given in the materials is, however, useful for children living everywhere.

In developing this program, more than 10,000 accident reports from throughout the United States were analyzed to determine what a child does that places him or her in danger. Literature written in this country and abroad was examined. Experts in pedestrian safety and child development were interviewed to find what measures could be taken to reduce the preschool accident rate. Educational programs of traffic safety in the U.S. and in foreign countries were also examined.

From all these sources, we have learned the following facts about preschool pedestrian accidents:

- Most preschool accidents fall into five major categories (see the section Common Preschool Pedestrian Accidents for more information). The most common preschool pedestrian accident is called the Dart-Out. Here the child enters the street midblock, usually near parked cars, and does not search for oncoming traffic. In most cases, the child was not attempting to cross the street but was entering the roadway to retrieve the ball or was being chased. Research studies indicate that as many as 90% of the street entries made by young children are inadequate and unsafe.
- Most children are injured near homes, often on the very street where they live.
- More than twice as many preschool boys as girls are involved in accidents.
- Most accidents take place in fair weather during the warm weather months.
- Most accidents occur in the late afternoon hours, with 3 to 5 p.m. being the peak hours in which children are involved in accidents.

Interestingly, these findings are not unique to this country. Cross-cultural data gathered from Scandinavia, England, Japan, Germany, and New South Wales reveal similar patterns. In all countries, about the same proportion of boys to girls are injured in accidents. The timing, location, and circumstances leading to these accidents are also similar. Why is this? We can infer that children the world over react in a similar fashion when walking or playing near traffic. Whether they live in Sydney, Oslo, or Washington, D.C., young children appear to be similarly vulnerable to the dangers of traffic.

This information about the circumstances leading to preschool pedestrian accidents has enabled us to develop specific program advice for keeping youngsters safe in traffic. This holds the promise of breaking the chain of events that leads to accidents. The WITS Program is a carefully planned curriculum that has been critically reviewed by teachers and parents of preschool children. When used in your classroom, the WITS Program for Preschoolers can help children learn the skills that will make them safer in traffic.

The Developmental Capabilities of the Young Child: What Happens to Four- and Five-Year-Olds in Traffic?

Children who are just learning to be social, to explore their environment, and to test their physical skills find it impossible to always be good pedestrians. They may be eager to learn about traffic safety and truly want to please their parents and teachers by heeding their words. But the temptations of play and the distractions of friends and relatives can be too much. A shiny nickel in the street, a pile of leaves across the road, or a game of catch across the street are hard for a youngster to resist. Suddenly the child forgets all that has been learned. The only thing that matters is that the nickel needs to be picked up, the leaves jumped in, or the game joined. Traffic safety takes a back seat to the here and now. Consider the following:

Because Four- and Five-Year-Olds	In Traffic They May...
are short in stature...	...not be able to see over parked cars or hedges into the street.
are highly emotional...	...suddenly run across the street to be comforted by a parent.
are filled with curiosity...	...wander into a road to pick up a hubcap or a toy.
can focus on only one thought at a time...	...run into a street after a ball without thinking that cars are in the street.
tend to look only at things that interest them...	...focus on people, animals, or ice cream trucks—not moving cars.
do not possess well-developed powers of memory...	...have difficulty remembering traffic safety instructions.
have limited vocabularies...	...misinterpret traffic concepts.
are likely to look straight ahead rather than use side vision...	...fail to see cars coming from the left or right.
have difficulty localizing sounds...	...not be able to tell from which direction a car is coming.
have difficulty judging speed and distance...	...not be able to guess how quickly a car is approaching.

These limitations pose a significant danger to the young child who is walking or playing outside. Past research studies have documented the effects of these developmental limitations on the causes of accidents.

Common Preschool Pedestrian Accidents

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has analyzed accidents involving preschoolers and developed a profile of the types of accidents involving children. Research shows that the most common type of urban accident takes place in the midblock area of the street when a child suddenly "darts out" in traffic. Typically, in a Dart-Out accident, a child who is standing or playing in the middle of a block suddenly runs into the street from between parked cars or other obstructions without first stopping and looking for oncoming traffic. Neither the driver, whose vision is blocked by the obstruction, nor the child is aware of the other's presence until it is too late to avoid a collision.

The second most common accident involving four- and five-year-olds is known as a "Midblock Dash." As with Dart-Out accidents, a child rushes into the street from the middle of the block. However, in Midblock Dash situations, the child is not blocked from the driver's view by an obstruction; the driver sees the child well ahead of time. The problem is that the driver never suspects that the child will suddenly enter the street. In almost every instance, drivers involved in this type of accident say they thought the accident victim was safe on a sidewalk or in a yard.

Together, Dart-Outs and Midblock Dashes account for almost two-thirds (63%) of all urban pedestrian accidents involving four- and five-year-olds. Undoubtedly, the most dangerous site for these youngsters is in the middle of the block. The figure on the next page shows how serious a problem these midblock accidents are for urban preschoolers.

The third most dangerous site for four- and five-year-olds is at an intersection. Some 12% of accidents involving youngsters of four and five take place at this locale. The percentage of youngsters involved in Dart-Out and Midblock Dash accidents is about the same as ages four and five as at ages two and three, but the percentage of children involved in intersection-related accidents is double that of ages two and three (6%). This increase may be explained by the fact that four- and five-year-olds are more mobile than younger children and are thus more likely to be exposed to the dangers of an intersection. With increased exposure comes the probability of increased accident involvement. In an intersection-related accident, known as an Intersection Dash, a child usually runs through an intersection and is struck by a vehicle whose driver did not see the youngster until it was too late to take effective action.

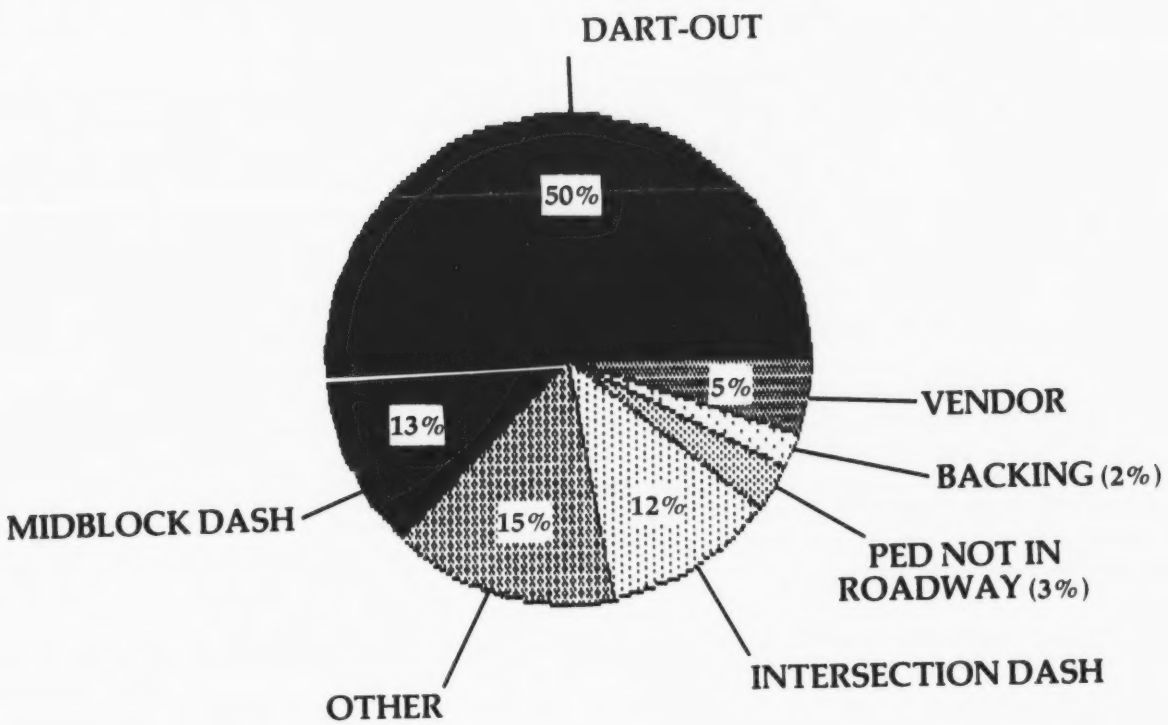
Fewer accidents involving four- and five-year-olds take place in locales such as driveways, alleys, and parking lots. While these areas are not as dangerous, they do account for 3% of accidents involving these youngsters. Accidents occurring in driveways, alleys, parking lots, private roads, gas stations, and ball fields are known collectively as "Pedestrian Not in Roadway" accidents. These accidents typically occur when a child who is not looking for cars is hit by a driver who did not see or did not expect the child to cross in front of the car. Also included in this category are accidents caused by out-of-control cars who hit a pedestrian standing on a curb.

The least frequent major accident category is the Backing type of accident (2%). In backing accidents, the child who is in a street, at an intersection, or in an off-roadway area is hit by a vehicle going in reverse. In most reported incidents, the child was not even aware that the backing vehicle was in motion. Although most drivers involved had looked to their rear, they did not perceive the need for evasive action until it was too late.

These five types of accidents account for 85% of all pedestrian accidents involving four- and five-year-olds.* The WITS materials are targeted toward reducing these types of accidents.

*The remaining 15% of accidents include ice cream vendor-related accidents, turning vehicle-related accidents, accidents caused by a child running into a vehicle, and assorted unclassified accidents. None of these accident categories accounts for more than 5% of accidents involving this age group.

Major Urban Pedestrian Accidents Types Involving Four- and Five-Year-Olds



Helping Children Use Their WITS: How the Program Works

The WITS Program for Preschoolers is based on the premise that pedestrian accidents involving preschoolers could be reduced if the factors leading to accidents are changed. This can be done by:

(1) modifying the child's actions;

(2) changing the traffic environment;

(3) altering the motorist's behavior.

The WITS Program does not address motorists, but does deal directly with the first two approaches.

The WITS Program helps to reduce accidents:

(1) **By teaching children safe walking behaviors.** The beginning books in the WITS series lay the foundation for traffic safety instruction, teaching traffic-related vocabulary and boundaries. Later books teach children specific safe walking skills.

(2) **By making adults more aware of the need for supervising young children near traffic.** Research confirms that most youngsters involved in traffic accidents were not properly supervised at the time of the accident. The WITS series provides appropriate guidelines for supervision.

(3) **By making adults aware of the need for demonstrating safe walking skills.** Children need more than verbal instructions. They need to watch those whom they respect use the advice that is preached. The WITS Program encourages the modeling of safe walking behavior.

At the heart of the WITS Program for four- and five-year olds are four storybooks on pedestrian safety. These books present a sequential approach to teaching pedestrian safety. Children get information in an enjoyable format at a rate and level they can understand. To make best use of the learning potential of the children's materials, this guidebook provides a lesson plan with each storybook. Each lesson plan contains: (1) a lesson goal, (2) questions to ask the class about the storybook, (3) activities to reinforce the content, (4) skills that will strengthen the children's developmental capabilities in traffic, (5) coordination ideas for parents, and (6) a checklist to assess mastery. At the end of the lessons are handout sheets for parents. These can be duplicated and distributed to the parents of children in your class.

You can use the WITS materials in various ways. For instance, you may wish to:

- **Use the WITS Program as a full course of study.** The WITS materials may be taught as a self-contained unit on pedestrian traffic safety.
- **Use the WITS Program to augment your ongoing curriculum.** You may find that pedestrian safety relates well to other activities, such as household safety or the need to wear seatbelts in cars. If so, weave the WITS materials into these other content areas, including activities you feel lend themselves best to this purpose. In so doing you can help the youngsters in your class realize that pedestrian safety is another important area where they can learn lifelong skills.
- **Use the WITS storybooks as you would any other children's literature.** In addition to teaching pedestrian safety, the WITS booklets for children are meant to be used as storybooks. Keep them available for your children in a library corner or on a bookshelf.

Regard the WITS materials as you would any teaching tool: adapt them to the needs of your classroom and your own educational objectives.

A Note about the Lessons

As mentioned, this guidebook is designed for use with four- and five-year-olds. The storybooks in the WITS series written for four- and five-year-olds (Storybooks 6-9) build on the traffic safety concepts introduced in earlier storybooks. Review these earlier storybooks to understand the foundation for the later ones. If the youngsters in your class are new to the WITS Program, we suggest that you read these storybooks with your children before delving into the storybooks for four- and five-year-olds so they will understand the skills introduced in earlier books.

Storybook 6, The Brothers, applies the skills learned in Storybook 5 on detecting movement in parked cars to a real-life situation. In Storybook 7, The Six Steps, the entire sequence of crossing the street from a midblock point is presented. Storybook 8, Andrew and the Big Kids, reinforces the steps involved in crossing the street midblock and stresses the need to withstand peer pressure not to cross a street alone. The last storybook in the series (Storybook 9), Sharon Goes to School, serves as a review for the entire WITS series. It also introduces the concept of crossing at intersections and provides guidance.

The WITS Program teaches children how to cross the street midblock safely under the supervision of a responsible adult. Teaching children how to cross the street midblock does NOT, however, mean that the WITS Program contradicts the time-honored advice of "crossing at the corner." In planning a trip to school, a relative's house, or the store, it is always safest to **plan** to cross street at the corner.

With preschoolers, though, most accidents occur during impulsive moments of play—not during a planned trip. Most accidents have a socially-motivated cause: the child has gone to retrieve a toy from the street, to greet a relative, or to play with leaves on the curb. In the majority of instances, the child made a snap decision to enter the street; he or she had no thought-out plan that included walking to the corner. For this reason, the WITS Program takes the position that the problem must be attacked where it exists.

This approach is backed by research. A recent study reported that preschool and school-age children exposed to public service announcements and a film on how to cross midblock locations safely experienced significantly fewer midblock accidents. The group with the most improved accident rate was children four to six years old.

A second important reason for teaching children to cross the street midblock relates to the immaturity of the young child. Midblock crossings are easier for children to master. At midblock, traffic occurs in only two directions and no lights or signs must be searched for or interpreted. At an intersection, on the other hand, traffic comes from four directions, turning cars (including those turning "right on red") must be dealt with, and lights and signs must be searched for and interpreted correctly. The skills needed to walk safely through an intersection are too complex for most preschoolers. The foundation for these skills, however, can be laid by teaching youngsters safe midblock crossing behaviors. With developmental growth, preschoolers can eventually apply what they have learned about midblock crossings to intersections. The last book in the WITS series, intended for five-and-one-half-year-olds, capitalizes on this earlier training and introduces the concepts involved in crossing at an intersection.

Finally, there is the very real fact of life that even during planned trips, we sometimes choose to cross the street midblock. This is especially true when the corner is some distance away.

Learning to cross the street safely midblock can be a child's most important first lesson in learning pedestrian safety.

LESSON 1: The Brothers

Storybook 6 is written for four-year-olds. It strives to help children apply what they have learned about checking for movement in parked cars to a real-life situation. After making a false start and nearly being run over by a parked car that is about to back up, the two brothers in this book learn to follow the proper procedures for walking between parked cars. Another lesson in this story is that reciting traffic rules without thinking about what is being said can lead to danger.

Lesson Goal:

Children will be able to (1) demonstrate how to walk safely between parked cars, and (2) explain why reciting traffic rules without thinking about what is being said is not safe.

Questions to Ask:

After reading the book with your students, see whether they can answer questions such as:

- What signs of movement did Victor notice in the car? Why didn't Jonathan see these signs?
- Why did the brothers stop first at the curb and then at the edge of the parked cars to check for moving cars?
- What was the rule that the brothers used? Why didn't the rule work? Was the rule wrong? (Note: Not only does the rule apply to streets that have no parked cars or other obstructions present; it also uses words like "left" and "right," which are confusing to preschoolers.)
- Are there any other signs of movement to look for that were not mentioned in the story?
- Who do you think was the more helpful brother, Jonathan or Victor?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- Take the group outdoors and ask another teacher or aide to start up a car, as if he or she were about to drive off. Ask the children to look at the car and name all the signs of movement that they see or hear. Try this activity first on a car with its rear visible, then on a car with its front end in view. Have the children discuss what signs of movement could be seen from each direction and which signs were particular to either the front or rear of the car.
- Have the children look at toy cars that are moved from a "parked" position to a "moving" position. How do these cars compare with real cars that are ready to move? What signs do you need to watch for in real life that you might not see in a parked car?
- Take the class on a walk in which various obstacles can be found near the curb that would block a child's vision of the street. A trash can, a pile of leaves, a hedge, etc., might all be suitable for this exercise. Ask the children to approach each object and discuss why it is difficult to see around it. Encourage them to devise a plan for looking around these objects. Make sure that the youngsters understand that although these objects are not dangerous in the way that a backing vehicle is, they do present danger in that they block our view of the street.
- Ask the children to think up some rules, especially those that are in rhyme form. Ask them to think about these rules—do they just say the words by heart or do they think about what the words mean? Discuss with the class why we have rules and the dangers of not listening to the words being recited.

Skills to Work on:

One of the important concepts introduced in this lesson is learning how to anticipate events. The main characters in this story learn that *signs* of movement in a parked car mean that a car is about to move. Children need to practice making associations that will help them predict future events.

As a beginning activity, discuss with the class the idea of how we know when something is about to happen. What signs do we look for? If they see someone putting on a coat, what does this mean? (Answer: The person is going outside, the temperature is cold, etc.)

To continue development of this skill, play a game with the class: "If I see or hear . . . , it means that . . . ." As shown in the examples below, more than one answer may be appropriate. Encourage children to "brainstorm" answers.

- If I see **smoke** . . . it means that **there's a fire**
- If I hear a **bell ringing** . . . it means that the **ice cream truck is coming.**
  . . . it means that **school is starting.**
  . . . it means that **someone on a bicycle wants you to get out of his way.**
- **If I see my mother set the table . . . it means that we're going to eat soon.**

Parent Coordination:

- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.
- Familiarize parents with the lesson learned about rules in Storybook 6. Ask them to discuss the idea with their children at home. Do they have any family rules (especially rhyming ones) that are often said automatically, without thinking of the content?

Checklist:

(To be completed with individual students or for the group as a whole.)

To ensure that your students have mastered the content in this storybook, see whether they can do the following from a midblock position between parked cars:

- Show where to stand to cross the street ☐
- Tell you three things that may mean a parked car is getting ready to drive away ☐
- Scan parked cars to look for movement (look left-right-left) ☐
- Walk carefully with you or another adult between parked cars ☐
- Stop at the edge of the parked cars to look for traffic in the street ☐
- Scan the street for approaching cars (look left-right-left) ☐
- State when no oncoming vehicles are presented and it would be safe to enter the street ☐

LESSON 2: The Six Steps

For the first time, Storybook 7 puts together all the skills presented in earlier books on how to cross the street safely from a midblock position. The little girl in the storybook shows her father how to accomplish successfully each of the six steps involved. Afterwards, she and her father cross a number of other streets together.

Lesson Goal:

Children will be able to perform the six-step sequence for crossing a street safely from a midblock position between parked cars.

Questions to Ask:

As you read through Storybook 7 with your class, see whether they can answer questions such as these:

- Who can name the first step in crossing the street? (The second, third, etc.?) What is the little girl in the picture doing to show that she knows how to do this step?
- Who can point to a number that tells you what step the little girl is doing?
- In the step one picture is one flower. Who can find it? (Two squirrels and two butterflies for step two, three birds for step 3, four flowers and four birds for step four, five birds and five cats for step five, and six puppies and six leaves for step 6).
- Why does this page (pointing to 30 or 32) have the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 on it?
- Does the little girl know how to cross the street by herself—or does she still need a grown-up with her?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- Whenever the group is outdoors in a crossing situation, review the six-step crossing sequence. You might have the group yell out the numbers for each step involved. Remember, though, that as with rules, you don't want the children to recite the steps without thinking about them. Make sure that the youngsters *understand* what goes into each step.
- If you have bulletin board space, try putting the numbers 1 to 6 on the wall. Then ask the children to draw pictures illustrating each step. To follow up on the numbering concept used in the book, try hanging one picture under step one, two pictures under step two, etc. Or have the children try to draw one flower or animal for the step one picture, etc.
- When playing outdoors, set up a situation in which a ball is thrown into the roadway. Have the youngsters discuss how they would retrieve the ball using the six steps. Then select one youngster to lead you through the process.
- As a small group activity, select six youngsters and tell them that each one represents a different step in the safe crossing sequence. Ask "Step One" child to tell the group what his or her role is. Continue until all six steps have been given. Try rearranging the "steps" so that children can see why there is an order to the process.

Skills to Work on:

The last activity mentioned above can be used as a lead-in for skill development activities. The most important concept introduced in The Six Steps is the idea of a sequence—that certain steps go together to form a process—a way of doing something. To help children learn more about sequencing:

- Discuss the idea of a sequence (without necessarily using the word) with the class. Point out that sometimes when we do an activity, a number of steps are involved. For instance, when we get ready for bed, we take off our clothes, take a bath, and put on our pajamas. Ask the children what would happen if we did these things out of order? Would we be wearing our day clothes to bed? Taking a bath with our pajamas on? Stress that sometimes there is one right order for doing things.
- In group discussions, see if the class can come up with some other sequences (setting a table, eating a meal, doing the dishes). Try to select examples that become absurd when done out of order. This will help point out why there are sequences.
- Follow sequencing discussions with concrete activities that involve ordering, such as putting blocks in ascending order of size. As with the discussion on activities, show what can happen if things are put together out of order.

Parent Coordination:

- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.
- Share with parents the six steps their children have learned for midblock crossings. If possible, prepare a flyer that describes the six steps.

Checklist:

(To be completed with individual students or for the group as a whole.)

To check whether the children in your class have mastered the content in this storybook, test them on the following on a regular basis. (These are, of course, the six steps):

Child is able to—

- Always stop at the curb before entering the street ..... ☐
- Always check parked cars for possible movement ..... ☐
- Always stop at the edge of parked cars before going into the street ..... ☐
- Always check for moving cars in the road ..... ☐
- Always recheck the roadway for moving cars if any cars have passed ..... ☐
- Always check for cars while walking across the street ..... ☐

LESSON 3: Andrew and the Big Kids

Storybook 8 is a review of the six steps involved in safely crossing the street midblock. Although the steps are not spelled out 1-2-3-4-5-6 as in Storybook 7, all are presented in the same sequence. Here the crossing sequence is applied to a real-life situation. Storybook 8 also introduces the important concept of peer pressure and the need to sometimes withstand this pressure—especially if safety is involved.

Lesson Goal:

Children will be able to (1) perform the safe crossing sequence on a variety of roadways, and (2) explain why it is sometimes important not to do what other children want us to do.

Questions to Ask:

In reading Storybook 8 with the class, you may wish to ask questions such as:

- Did Andrew know how to cross the street correctly?
- Did Andrew do all six steps? Can you name them?
- Why did Andrew get upset when the big kids teased him? Why do you think the big boys teased Andrew? Have you ever felt like Andrew? Do you have a secret place you like to go when you are unhappy?
- Was Andrew "right" not to listen to the big boys?
- Should Andrew's mom have let him cross the street alone? Why or why not?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- Ask individual children in the class to walk you across the street and relate to you, as Andrew did to his mother, what steps he or she is following.
- Discuss with the class the concept of family rules—why they are made and what they mean. Encourage children to express their feelings about having to behave one way when other children do not. Help the children realize that not all families behave in the same way. For example, some families have rules about bedtimes, about eating meals together, and about the amount of time that can be spent watching television that are very different from rules of other families. Some families may have no rules. Make sure that the youngsters understand that because someone else's family does things differently, this does not mean that those people are better or worse than their family—they're just different. Discuss the idea that we all have to obey family rules—even if it is sometimes not fun to do so.
- As a follow-up to the discussion, bring up the idea of school rules. What rules can they think of? (Putting away art supplies, picking up blocks, lining up to go outside, not speaking while the teacher is talking, etc.) Have the children discuss how these rules are like family rules.

Skills to Work on:

One of the important ideas in this storybook is the need to withstand peer pressure, especially when safety is involved. For the social five-year-old, this is an especially difficult concept to master. Children this age are so eager to be like their friends that they may find it hard to behave in the exemplary fashion Andrew did. To help children deal with these feelings, try having children in the class role-play situations such as these:

- You are supposed to stay at home and play with your baby brother, but your friends want you to go outside to play. When you tell them you can't go, they start teasing you.
- Your mother told you that because it is raining you must wear boots to school. The other children make fun of you for dressing like a baby.
- You are not allowed to cross the street without a grown-up. The ice cream truck is parked across the street. All the other children in the neighborhood run to the truck and call for you. But you are not allowed to go. The other children laugh at you.

After each role-playing event, probe the "lead," to see how he or she felt. Did he or she feel badly? Like breaking the rule? What can people do to make themselves feel better? Can we gain a sense of satisfaction from knowing we are doing the "right" thing?

Another difficult concept highlighted in this book is the idea of delayed gratification. Andrew is told that he must wait until he is in first grade before he will be allowed to cross the street without a grown-up. To an impulsive child, putting off this privilege for so long demands maturity he or she may lack. To help children understand this process, try these activities:

- Read to the group some classic children's stories such as *Cinderella, Snow White,* or *The Goose Girl.* Ask the class to discuss how these heroines were rewarded for their good deeds. Point out that in each case, the main character lived "happily ever after"—but in each case this happiness did not come until much time had passed.
- Ask the children to share some of their own experiences when, like Andrew, they had to wait to get something they really wanted. How did it make them feel when they were told they had to wait? Then how did it make them feel when they finally got what they wanted? Did having to wait make them appreciate it more?

Parent Coordination:

- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.
- Ask parents to share some of their family rules with you so you can tie these to the class discussion.

(continued on next page)

Checklist:

(To be completed with individual students or for the group as a whole.)

Child is able to—

- Correctly perform the midblock crossing sequence when crossing the street near the center with the teacher ..... ☐
- Correctly perform the midblock crossing sequence when crossing the street near the center with an aide or other teacher ..... ☐
- Correctly perform the midblock crossing sequence with crossing a street other than one near the center with the teacher ..... ☐
- Correctly perform the midblock crossing sequence when crossing a street other than one near the center with an aide or other teacher ..... ☐
- Explain why it is important to keep a family's rule about safe crossing behavior ..... ☐

LESSON 4: Sharon Goes to School

Storybook 9, the last book in the WITS series, is a review book. Much of the important content presented in the earlier storybooks is summarized in this book. Children are also introduced to intersections and the complexities involved in crossing them. Children get introductory advice on how to cross an intersection.

In this book, Sharon and her mother practice walking behaviors in response to a series of clues Sharon's mother has made to help get to Sharon's school on the first day of the year.

Lesson Goal:

Children will be able to (1) perform the safe crossing sequence from a midblock point on streets and at entrances to alleys and driveways; (2) explain why crossing at an intersection requires assistance from a grown-up, and (3) tell how to look for oncoming traffic in crossing an intersection.

Questions to Ask:

As you go over Storybook 9 with your students, you might ask these questions:

- How did Sharon get ready for school?
- How did her mother make sure that Sharon wouldn't get lost—or be unsafe—in walking to school?

- How did Sharon know what she was supposed to be able to do after each clue?
- What is Sharon doing to make sure that it is safe to cross the alley? (The parking lot? The driveway? The intersection?)
- Did Sharon use all six steps in crossing the street when she and her babysitter went to retrieve the ball?
- Why are intersections so hard to cross?
- Once Sharon knows the way to school, should she be able to go by herself? Or will she still need a grown-up to walk with her?
- Can you follow the map to Sharon's school?

Activities to Accompany the Lesson:

- Take children on a walk that includes the traffic sites named in Storybook 9—an alley, a driveway, a street, an intersection. At each locale, review what a safe walker would do.
- In walking with the children, include non-roadway areas introduced in other WITS books but not included in Storybook 9, such as a parking lot. At each site, make sure that the children remember what safe walking procedures are involved.
- Take the children to several types of intersections—those with light controls, without light controls, with signs, without signs, etc. Make sure that children understand that intersections can vary greatly in how they look. But any time that two streets cross they form an intersection—and intersections require special attention by a walker.
- Give each child a drawing of a simple intersection, one in which streets cross. Ask the children to study an intersection near their home and to "fill in" this drawing with signs, lights, crosswalks, etc., that will make it more like the intersection near their homes.
- Lead a classroom discussion on why it is so difficult to cross at an intersection. Make sure that the children understand that because of turning vehicles and the presence of lights and signs, intersections are much harder to cross than streets. Reread out loud what Sharon's mother says in the storybook to emphasize this point. Construct an intersection out of blocks or paper mache to illustrate this discussion. Using toy cars and people, students can take turns showing how turning cars can surprise walkers who are trying to cross an intersection.
- When you are on field trips or walking with children through an intersection, review the basic procedure for walking through an intersection: checking for cars in front and behind, and looking left-right-left.

Skills to Work on:

Earlier storybooks in the WITS series have instructions such as "Look one way—then the other way—then back again." Here, though, these actions are labeled. Many younger children would be confused by labeling these actions, but most five-and-one-half-year-olds can begin to match the words to the actions. Once this is mastered, the crossing process becomes even easier for the child to understand and to follow.

To help children learn the concept of "left" and "right," try these activities:

- Play "Simon Says" with the class, giving as directions actions such as "Raise your right hand" or "Simon says shake your left foot."

(continued on next page)

- Have the class participate in musical action songs such as the "Hokey Pokey" in which they "put their right arm in and their arm out."
- Try some simplified square dancing with the group. One step they can learn is the "right and left grand" in which children join opposite hands and move around in a circle.
- In conversations with the children, direct them to the left or right. For example, ask a child to put the blocks on the bottom shelf, to the right.

Parent Coordination:

- Distribute copies of the Parent Handout Sheets to the parents of children in your class.
- Share with parents the work you are doing on labeling "left" and "right" so that these directions can be incorporated into safe crossing procedures. Ask parents to reinforce this labeling process at home.

Checklist:

(To be completed with individual students or for the group as a whole.)

Child is able to—

- Understand that children must always be accompanied by a grown-up when walking near any type of roadway ..... ☐
- Demonstrate the safe walking procedure for walking through an alley ..... ☐
- Demonstrate the safe walking procedure for crossing a driveway ..... ☐
- Demonstrate and follow all six steps involved in safely crossing a street midblock ..... ☐
- State in his/her own words why an intersection presents so many difficulties for a walker who wants to cross through it ..... ☐
- Demonstrate where to check for oncoming cars when crossing an intersection ..... ☐

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 6

To the Parent. . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning About Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine books teaches children the fundamentals of pedestrian traffic safety.

Storybook 6 in the WITS series, The Brothers, helps children master the first step in crossing the street safely midblock: walking between parked cars. The book also teaches youngsters that rules alone cannot keep one safe in traffic; *how* these rules are applied is important, too.

To help reinforce in the home environment what your child is learning at school try these activities:

- When on walks or starting up the family car, review with your child the signs that indicate that a car is about to move.

- If the street near your home has trash cans, piles of leaves, or other obstacles near the curb, point out to your child how these objects, like parked cars, can block one's view of the street. Walk with your child to the edge of these obstacles, and together scan the street for cars.

- If when crossing with your child you spot a car about to move, make sure that your child understands the need to stay on the curb and wait for that car to drive away before beginning the crossing procedure.

- When reviewing with your child the signs that indicate a parked car is about to move, make sure that your child understands that all types of vehicles (trucks, vans, motorcycles, etc.) must be checked, not just cars.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Four-Year-Olds in Traffic

Even though four-year-olds respect and appreciate their parents' advice about traffic safety, they still are not safe on their own because:

- Four-year-olds are mentally active. They find it difficult to pay attention to any one idea—like traffic safety—for very long.
- Four-year-olds are physically active, too. They like to run just to run, on streets as well as in yards.
- Young children are intently curious. A ball game across the street can easily beckon them into a roadway.

What kinds of accidents are four-year-olds involved in?

- More than half of all pedestrian accidents happen when a child darts into traffic from between parked cars or other obstacles.
- Fourteen percent of accidents occur when a child who is not blocked from the driver's view runs out into the middle of the street. The child's quick movements surprise the driver involved in the accident.
- Five percent of accidents involve a child who is on the way to or from an ice cream truck parked in the street.
- A smaller percentage of accidents takes place in off-street areas such as driveways, parking lots, and alleys.

To reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in a pedestrian accident:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway to prevent your child from entering it.
- Hold your child's hand when walking next to or entering a roadway.
- If you cannot be with your child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 7

For the Parent. . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning about Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine books teaches children the fundamentals of pedestrian traffic safety.

Storybook 7 in the WITS series, The Six Steps, teaches children the six steps involved in crossing a street midblock: (1) stopping at the curb, (2) checking parked cars for signs of possible movement, (3) stopping at the edge of parked cars, (4) checking the roadway for moving vehicles, (5) checking the roadway again if any vehicles have passed, and (6) checking for oncoming vehicles while entering the street.

To help reinforce in the home environment what your child is learning at school, try these activities:

- When you cross the street midblock with your child, use this six-step sequence. As you cross, ask your child what step comes first, second, third, etc. It may take your child a while to be able to master all six steps. If so, take it one step at a time.
- Reinforce the idea that the six steps should be applied to every street that is crossed midblock—not just the street near your home or your child's school.
- With your child, look in storybooks or magazines at pictures of people crossing streets. Ask your child what step he or she thinks the people in the pictures are doing. Help your child decide whether the people are doing a good (safe) job of crossing. If they are walking, are they checking for traffic? If they are young, are they walking with an adult? Have your child tell you what he or she thinks the people in the pictures *should* be doing to be absolutely safe while crossing.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Four-and-One-Half-Year-Olds in Traffic

Four-and-one-half-year-olds have made great strides in their traffic behaviors. Yet to be truly safe in traffic they need constant supervision and support because:

- Youngsters this age want to be independent. Children often think they can cope with traffic situations better than they really can.
- Four-and-one-half-year-olds are emotional. They may suddenly become stubborn and refuse to follow traffic safety instructions. Or they may become mischievous whirlwinds of energy. At these times, they are difficult to deal with in traffic.

What kinds of accidents are four-and-one-half-year-olds involved in?

- More than half of all pedestrian accidents take place when a child enters the street from between parked cars or other obstacles. Neither the driver of the car involved in the accident nor the youngster who was run over saw the other until it was too late to prevent the accident.
- Fourteen percent of accidents happen when a child and driver see each other ahead of time, but the driver does not anticipate that the child will enter the street.
- Fourteen percent of accidents take place at intersections.
- A smaller percentage of accidents takes place in off-roadway areas such as alleys, parking lots, and driveways.

To reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in a pedestrian accident:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway to prevent your child from entering it.
- Hold your child's hand when walking next to or entering a roadway.
- If you cannot be with your child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 8

For the Parent. . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning about Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine books teaches children the fundamentals of pedestrian traffic safety.

Storybook 8 in the WITS series, Andrew and the Big Kids, reviews the steps involved in crossing a street safely at midblock. It also introduces the idea of not giving in to peer pressure to cross the street without a grown-up.

To help reinforce in the home environment what your child is learning at school, try these activities:

- When you walk with your child and cross the street midblock, review together the six-step sequence taught in Storybook 7 and provided in the handout sheets for that storybook. Numbering all six steps is not always necessary, but this may be helpful for your child if he or she has difficulty in remembering the entire crossing sequence.
- Ask some friends or relatives to cross the street midblock with your child. Let your child serve as a "guide" to these adults in crossing the street safely.
- If you cross a street midblock on your way to school, ask your child to serve as the "coach" in crossing the street. Afterwards be sure to praise your "coach" for his or her expertise in safe walking behavior.
- Get together with other parents in your neighborhood and discuss the traffic safety rules that you have provided your child. By sharing each other's rules, you can help one another to respect family rules that are in effect in your neighborhood.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Five-Year-Olds in Traffic

Five-year-olds are remarkably accomplished and eager to be good pedestrians. Yet they are not yet developmentally able to handle the complexities of traffic because:

- Five-year-olds cannot judge how long it takes an approaching car to reach them.
- Five-year-olds have difficulty telling from which direction a traffic sound is coming.
- Youngsters this age are not skilled in using their side vision. They tend to see only what is directly ahead of them.

What kinds of accidents are five-year-olds involved in?

- Nearly half of all pedestrian accidents take place when a child suddenly darts into the street midblock from between parked cars or other obstacles. These accidents take place so suddenly that the driver of the car involved never sees the child until it is to late to avoid the accident.
- Fourteen percent of accidents take place in the midblock area when the child is in the driver's view but surprises the driver by dashing into the street.
- Fourteen percent of accidents take place at intersections.
- To a lesser extent, accidents also take place in off-street areas such as driveways, alleys, and parking lots.

To reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in a pedestrian accident:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway to prevent your child from entering it.
- Hold your child's hand when walking next to or entering a roadway.
- If you cannot be with your child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.

Parent Handout Sheets to Accompany Storybook 9

For the Parent. . .

Reinforcing at Home What Your Child Is Learning about Traffic Safety in School

Your child is participating in the Walking In Traffic Safely (WITS) Program for Preschoolers. This series of nine books teaches children the fundamentals of pedestrian traffic safety.

The last book in this series, (Storybook 9), Sharon Goes to School, reviews many important topics presented in earlier books: (1) how to cross an alley safely; (2) how to cross a driveway safely; and (3) how to cross a street safely at midblock. In addition, the procedure for safely crossing an intersection is introduced. Because intersections are complex and demand a great deal of skill, children are taught that at age five-and-one-half they still need help from parents at intersections. Children can, however, learn the basic procedure for checking the streets in front of them, behind them, and to the left and right for traffic.

To help reinforce in the home environment what your child is learning at school, try these activities:

- When you walk with your child through any roadway or off-street area where there may be traffic (driveway, alley, parking lot, gas station, etc.) emphasize the need to look left-right-left for oncoming cars.
- In walks with your child, discuss the different kinds of intersections you pass. Note that some have traffic lights, some have stop signs, some have crosswalks. Emphasize that no matter how they differ in appearance, when two streets cross they form an intersection, and intersections demand special attention on the part of the walker.
- As you cross an intersection with your child, help him or her understand all the steps that you are doing to make sure that it is safe to cross. For example, if you are waiting for cars that might be turning "right on red," discuss this activity with your child. Stress the importance of crossing with a grown-up who is familiar with these procedures.

For the Parent. . .

Facts about Five-and-One-Half-Year-Olds in Traffic

Five-and-one-half-year-olds are a storehouse of knowledge and have many accomplishments. They know a lot about traffic safety and eager to demonstrate their skills. Yet they still need supervision when walking or playing near traffic because:

- Five-and-one-half-year-olds can be overwhelmed by a complex traffic environment. It is hard for them to focus on more than one thing at a time. Turning cars are especially difficult for them to deal with.
- They have trouble interpreting traffic signs and signals.
- Five-and-one-half-year-olds frequently misinterpret traffic vocabulary words. They may forget who is a pedestrian and who is a driver or a passenger in a car.

What kinds of accidents are five-and-one-half-year-olds involved in?

- Nearly half of all pedestrian accidents are caused when a child suddenly darts into the road from between parked cars or other obstacles. The driver of the car that hit the child is almost always surprised.
- Fourteen percent of accidents happen when a child dashes into the midblock area of the street contrary to the expectations of the driver who had been watching the child but did not think the child would enter the roadway.
- Fourteen percent of accidents occur at intersections.
- Somewhat fewer accidents take place in off-street areas such as driveways, alleys, and parking lots.

To reduce the chances of your child becoming involved in a pedestrian accident:

- Stay beside your child at all times when your child is outside near a roadway.
- When near a roadway, position yourself between your child and the roadway to prevent your child from entering it.
- Hold your child's hand when walking next to or entering a roadway.
- If you cannot be with your child outside, leave your child with a responsible person.
- Provide a safe play area for your child away from roadways.

For more information:

Office of State Program Assistance, NTS-30
The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

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